SOUND FACTS

A Local Marine and Freshwater Habitat Protection Program for Puget Sound

The *Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan* identifies local actions that are part of a long-term comprehensive plan to protect and restore Puget Sound's marine and freshwater habitats. Jurisdictions are encouraged to examine the management plan's Marine and Freshwater Habitat program to determine where the gaps exist in their own programs, and to set priorities for taking action to fill those gaps. The program is on the Action Team website at: www.wa.gov/puget_sound/Publications/manplan00/mp_index.htm

Comprehensive Planning

Local land use planning integrates needs for watersheds, salmon recovery, transportation, stormwater management, economic viability, desired open space, and public access to shorelines. Local government planning involves citizens in creating a vision of their future community and then incorporates that vision into:

- Growth Management Act Comprehensive Plans
- Shoreline Master Program Updates
- NPDES Stormwater Permit Programs
- WSDOT 20-year state highway system plans
- Mixed-Use Master planned developments

Acquisition and Restoration

Within any local jurisdiction lie marine or freshwater habitats that provide important ecological functions like fish and wildlife habitat, stormwater retention and treatment, flood attenuation, aesthetic open space that preserves and increases property value, and recreational benefits to the community. Acquiring those properties may save the jurisdiction considerable financial resources for replacing or restoring ecological functions. Because habitats and the functions they provide are a result of natural processes like flooding, erosion and plant succession that take place over many years, it may be less costly in the long-term to protect them by acquisition. A local government acquisition and restoration program should:

- Acquire lands that sustain existing habitats and functions important to the community.
- Provide for responsible management of acquired lands.
- Provide incentives for private preservation and restoration.
- Engage in restoration of natural processes in partnership with other organizations.

Ecology's publication "Exploring Wetlands Stewardship" Pub. #96-120 is a helpful guide for various acquisition strategies and funding sources. http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/96120.pdf

Ecology's publication "Restoring wetlands at a river basin scale" Pub. # 97-99 explains how natural processes should be considered for effective restoration.
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/97099.pdf

Education

The public access sites in a community such as parks, shorelines, and open space, not only improve the quality of life for citizens, they provide great locations to inform citizens about natural processes, ecological functions, biological diversity and the intrinsic value of nature. Clearly mark and maintain existing public access sites and make maps of these sites available to residents and visitors. Design and construct passive educational signs and exhibits or active education programs about the habitat, the natural processes that created and sustain it, economic value of the functions it provides the community, and the diversity of creatures that share the habitat with humans.

Regulation

Without strong implementation and enforcement of local land use regulations developed under the planning programs above, degradation and loss of important marine and freshwater habitats will continue. Regulatory actions should be tracked to allow for adaptive management of standards to new approaches or changing conditions. Restricting new shoreline armoring and limiting the construction of new levees in floodplains and estuarine wetlands will protect shoreline processes.

Puget Sound Nearshore Estuarine Restoration Project

In recent years, citizens, governments, tribes, and scientists, have realized the importance of eelgrass beds, kelp forests, salt marshes, beaches, backshore areas and bluffs to sustaining the health of Puget Sound. In addition, these **Nearshore Habitats** have received attention as important migratory corridors for juvenile salmon and spawning grounds for forage fish such as surf smelt and herring. Building on local efforts, the US Army Corps of Engineers has initiated a unique agreement establishing a project to understand and protect the nearshore habitats of Puget Sound.

The Corps project, in partnership with the state and other local partners, will begin with assessments leading to a clearer picture of how nearshore habitats work. This information will be used to identify regions and sites for habitat restoration and enhanced levels of protection. Once priority restoration projects are identified, the Corps will pay 65% of construction costs Local and tribal governments can contribute to the project by providing relevant data to the Corps-state partnership and can benefit from the project by signing on to a cost-share agreement for work they are doing with non-federal funds. For information on this exciting new project, contact Bernie Hargrave at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (206) 764-6839 or Tim Smith at Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (360) 902-2223.

For more information, check out the complete text of the Puget Sound plan, additional fact sheets about the update process, and information about the Action Team at **www.wa.gov/puget_sound** or call the Action Team at **(360) 407-7300** or **1 (800) 54-SOUND.** If you need these materials in an alternative format, call our TDD number 1-800-833-6388.